

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-mentioned Office Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-8 are now pending, with claim 1 being the only independent claim. Claim 9 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. Claims 1 and 4 have been amended. Support for the amendments can be found throughout the originally-filed disclosure, include, for example, at paragraph 0033 of the specification. Thus, Applicants submit the amendments include no new matter.

Claims 1-4 and 6-9 are rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Block et al. (U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. 2003/0055689 A1). Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Block et al. in view of Walker et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,897,620).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections. Nevertheless, without conceding the propriety of the rejections and solely to expedite prosecution, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 to clarify the distinctions between the cited references and the claimed invention. Applicants submit amended independent claim 1 is patentably distinguishable from the cited references for at least the following reasons.

The Office Action cites Block et al. as disclosing a method comprising, inter alia, receiving a travel booking for a travel plan by a first travel channel. Specifically, the Office Action cites to the disclosure in paragraph 0051 of Block et al. of a user of the disclosed system making a reservation via a web page on a personal computer.

Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Block et al. fails to disclose or suggest the consumer travel integration method recited in amended claim 1, which includes a step of a travel counselor making a travel booking for a travel plan.

In Applicants' view, Block et al. only discloses the method to include steps involving a traveler, not a travel counselor or agent. At no point does Block et al. disclose

or suggest steps involving interaction with travel counselors or agents, and, correspondingly, at no point does Block et al. disclose or suggest that the method to include a step performed by a travel counselor's office. As such, Block et al. does not disclose or suggest "receiving a travel booking for [a] travel plan form a travel counselor at a travel counselor office," as recited in conjunction with the rest of the method of claim 1 of the present application.

In fact, Applicants submit that Block et al. appears to teach away from the idea of including a travel counselor in the methods disclosed therein. Block et al. discloses that an object of the invention disclosed therein is to enable "travelers to rapidly and interactively communicate via the Internet or other networks with desired websites or other devices for making all necessary travel arrangements for a desired trip." Paragraph 0004 (emphasis added). By being able to make all necessary travel arrangements for a trip, the traveler in the methods disclosed by Block et al. has no need for interaction with a travel agent or counselor.

Moreover, Block et al. notes that the users of the system must join or become members of the system. Paragraph 0049. Block et al. also includes an extensive discussion involving the use of the traveler's personal information in conjunction with aspects of the system, including security features of the system. See, pp. 14-23. This disclosure of Block et al., therefore, suggests that the users/members of the system should only be the travelers themselves. Any sort of modification to the system to allow for use of Block et al.'s system by non-travelers, such as travel counselors or agents, would only result in less security surrounding the system.

Applicants further submit the secondary citation to Walker et al. fails to cure the deficiencies of Block et al. Walker et al. is cited in the Office Action as disclosing a traveller contacting a travel agent by email, and thereby allegedly showing in analogous art the feature of the claimed invention of receiving a travel booking by an unformatted email message. Applicants submit, however, that Walker et al. fails to suggest receiving a travel

booking from a travel counselor in conjunction with the other features recited in amended independent claim 1. Moreover, as discussed above, Block et al. teaches away from any modification of the system disclosed therein to include travel counselors or agents, and, thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to any disclosure in Walker et al. with respect to travel agents or counselors for modification of the method disclosed by Block et al.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that the cited references of Block et al. and Walker et al., wether taken individually or collectively, fail to disclose or suggest the consumer travel integration method recited in amended independent claim 1.

The remaining claims in this application are dependent claims which depend directly from claim 1, and are therefore patentable for the reasons noted above with respect to claim 1. In addition, each of the dependent claims recites features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the cited references. Favorable and independent consideration thereof is respectfully sought.

In particular, with respect to amended dependent claim 4, Applicants submit that Block et al. fails to disclose or suggest providing a plurality of travel counselor offices having access to a host server, in combination with the rest of the claimed travel integration method. In the Office Action, the disclosure in Block et al. of “kiosks” is equated to the features previously recited in claim 4. The “kiosks” disclosed in Block et al. refer to computer stations placed in concourses of an airport. See, e.g., paragraphs 0072, 0074, and 0094. Nothing in Block et al. suggests any other placement of the kiosks, and, as discussed above, the reference is devoid of any discussion of travel counselors or travel counselor offices. Thus, Applicants submit that Block et al.’s disclose of “kiosks” cannot be equated to the features recited in amended claim 4.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the outstanding rejections to the claims, and passage to issue of the present application.

Any fee required in connection with this paper should be charged to Deposit Account No. 06-1205.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below

Respectfully submitted,

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